The Ecology of the Japanese Verb *Naru* in Crosslinguistic Perspective

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1. The verb *naru* in Japanese is a remarkable lexical item. It is already found in use in such earliest documents in Japanese as Kojiki (712), *Idzumofudoki* (733) and *Man'yoshu* (supposed to contain *waka* pieces composed up to 759). Through the subsequent centuries, it remains to be part of the basic vocabulary of the Japanese language. Thus, according to some statistical studies, the verb *naru* ranks between tenth and fifteenth in frequency among the basic verbs of the language in the ninth and the tenth centuries, only surpassed by such verbs as *ari* ('be'), *ifu* ('say'), *miru* ('see/look'), *su* ('do') and *ku* ('come')（浅見 1971:133）. And in Modern Japanese, we are witnessing a steady expansion of the scope of the use of the verb. This is evident if you compare the original text of the first volume, named 'Kiritsubo', of *Genjimonogatari* (written around 1000) with its 'modern Japanese translations'. In the original version by Murasakishikibu, the verb *naru* occurs only 26 times. In the latest translation (2017) by Nozomu Hayashi, however, we find a little over a hundred uses of the verb *naru*. I may also add that an earlier translation (1938) by the noted author, Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, the verb *naru* is used nearly two hundred times! All this attests to the fact that the verb *naru* in Japanese has been as active and lively as ever, and is perhaps even more so than ever.

2. It was about two years ago, however, that I rather abruptly came to realize that there was something peculiar in the way in which the Japanese verb *naru* has diachronically evolved. I was reviewing a report of research (supported by Grant in Aid (C) 16K 00217) by a group headed by Michiyo Moriya of Soka University on the verbs which are maximally equivalent to the Japanese verb '*naru*' (to be transcribed as NARU in the following) in a number of languages of the Altaic family on the eastern part of the Eurasian continent. What surprised me was that in these languages (including such major languages as Turkish, Mongolian, Yakut, Singhalese, and Korean), the verb NARU behaves rather differently from Japanese. As I am going to discuss later in my presentation, there are two major semantic areas with which the verb NARU is closely associated – namely what I propose to call 'emergence'（＜出現＞/＜出来（しゅったい）＞）and 'transition'（＜推移＞）. These two semantic orientations, in turn, are associated with linguistically encoding the process of change in terms of the syntactic frames, ＜Y ガナル＞ ('Y ga naru') and ＜Y ニナル＞ ('Y ni naru') respectively, as when we say in Japanese 「実がなる」('Mi ga naru') referring to the process of change as 'emergence' and 「実になる」('Mi ni naru') referring to the process of change as 'transition'). While both types of encoding are attested across the languages of the Altaic family, what I find surprising is that Japanese is rather extreme in dismissing the 'emergence' type of encoding in favour of the 'transition' type of encoding. Thus while in major languages of the Altaic family, speakers refer to the arrival of spring in terms of 'emergence' and say 「春（ガ）ナル」('Haru (ga) naru')、the Japanese speakers seem to have shifted to referring to it in terms of 'transition' and say 「春ニナル」('Haru ni naru'), where the word *haru* ('spring') is encoded as the goal which is arrived at after a process of change and not as some new entity which emerges at the end of a process of change.

This led me to think that in order to appreciate the apparently peculiar behaviour of the verb *naru* in Japanese, we have to start, first of all, by drawing a semantic map of possible types of construal with which the verb NARU may be associated crosslinguistically and check the behaviour of the verb NARU in individual languages against this backdrop. The present paper, however, is meant to be only an interim report.

3.1 Let me start with (1) as a maximally abstract representation of the kinds of the process of change referred to by the verb NARU:

(1)　　　X　　　——→　　　Y　(verbalized as 'X kara Y ni NARU')
　　　(SOURCE)　　　　　(GOAL)

When linguistically encoded, (1) can be realized in two ways (either (2a) or (2b)), depending on whether either X or Y is topicalized:

(2a)　　　X　　　——→　　　Y　(verbalized as 'X kara Y ga naru')
　　　(SOURCE)　　　　　**<TOPIC>**
(2b)　　　X　　　——→　　　Y　(verbalized as 'X ga Y ni naru')
　　　<TOPIC>　　　　　(GOAL)

Referred to in common both by (2a) and by (2b) is a process in which X at the initial stage undergoes some kind of change and ends up as Y at the final stage. While (2b) represents the process of change in a relatively 'unmarked' way, (2a) focuses on Y in particular and represents it as something which newly emerges at the final stage. The use of (2a) is thus constrained, first grammatically, (i.e. Y should be encoded linguistically as a noun) and second, pragmatically, (i.e. Y should carry overtly new information of some kind). In contrast to (2b), (2a) is the 'marked' variant in representing a process of change. Let me refer to (2b) and (2a) as 'transition' type and 'emergence' type respectively.

3.2. There are still further specifications to be made on each of the two types. Concerning (2a), namely, the 'emergence' type of the use of the verb NARU, I have just one more point to mention. (2a) is a schema which contains X functioning as 'source' – it is a schema which is verbalized as 'X kara Y ga naru'. The point I would like to make is the fact that the X marked as source here is often left unmentioned in actual performance. This naturally will happen when the speaker actually does not know what X is. What is important here, however, is the fact that the speaker of language is apparently less interested in the initial state before a change takes place than the final state resulting from the change. This is what I once proposed to call 'the goal-over-source principle' (discussed initially in Ikegami (1981: 122-146) and later in more detail in Ikegami (1987)). I don't have enough time now to review the discussions I made in these articles. Let me just say here that the effect of this 'principle' is that in linguistically encoding on the basis of schema (2a), the source (X) is, more often than not, left unmentioned – with the result that the actually uttered sentences mention only what it is that emerges, without reference to the source from which it emerges. I suggest that this simply reflects the psychological bias in the way in which human cognition generally works – that is, being

2

more concerned with what may happen and affect the self rather than what already happened and can not be undone.   Taking this point into consideration, I reformulate (2a) accordingly and propose (2a') as a common variant of (2a):

(2a')   [?] ・・・→   Y   (verbalized as ' Y ga naru')
         (NOT ENCODED)   <**TOPIC**>

3.3 Concerning (2b), namely, the 'transition' type of the use of the verb NARU, the major question we have to address in the case of Japanese is the contrast between saying, 'X ga Y ni naru' and 'X ga Y to naru'.   A generally offered account for the difference between the two is that the former (i.e. *ni naru*) is the native Japanese way of saying, while the latter (i.e. *to naru*) derives from 'kundoku'(訓読), namely, a special way of reading classical ancient Chinese text in terms of Japanese.   It is also said that it is for this reason that saying '*to naru*' sounds somehow rigid and stylistically more elevated than saying '*ni naru*'.   So far as I am aware, we have one academic paper which specifically addresses the question of '*ni naru*' and '*to naru*', namely a paper by Tai Suzuki with the title, 'Chuko ni okeru Doshi "*naru*" no Yoho to Joshi "*ni*", "*to*" no Sokan' (The correlation between the Verb '*naru*' and the Joshi, '*ni*', '*to*' in Chuko(中古)), which appeared in *Kokugo to Kokubungaku* 52 (1975).   The author extensively surveys the different types of words and phrases that cooccur either with '*ni naru*' or '*to naru*' in a wide range of texts in Heian Period.   The survey shows that there is a large amount of overlapping between the words and phrases that cooccur with '*ni naru*' and those that cooccur with '*to naru*'.   Apparently, what is crucial here is not the different kinds and types of the words and phrases that cooccur but the different ways in which the speaker chooses to 'construe' (in the sense in which the word is used in cognitive linguistics) the given situation.   With this in mind, I now propose to explore an as yet unsolved question, namely the semantic difference between saying '*ni naru*' and saying '*to naru*'.

    One initial assumption we can safely make is that to the linguistic intuition of the Japanese speaker, saying '*ni naru*' is clearly the unmarked choice in comparison with '*to naru*', which sounds somehow marked.   As evidence supporting this claim, consider the following.   The Japanese verb *naru*, besides connecting to nominal phrases through the mediation of the particle *ni* or *to*, can also connect, quite freely, to a wide range of adjectives in renyokei (連用形), as in *okiku/kanashiku/kuraku/ atatakaku naru* ('become big(ger)/sad(der)/dark(er)/warm(er)).   In these collocations with adjectives, the verb *naru* sounds maximally 'unmarked' – semantically quite close to the verb *naru* collocated with nominal phrases through the mediation of the particle *ni*, and definitely not similar to the verb *naru* collocated through the mediation of the particle *to*.   (Incidentally, we may take this as a piece of evidence which shows that the prototypical use of the Japanese verb *naru* is to be found in its use in collocation with adjectives and not with nominal phrases.)

    Notice that even when used in collocation with nominal phrases through the mediation of the particle *ni* or *to*, there is a considerably more restriction imposed on the use of '*to naru*' than of '*ni naru*'.   Thus while there are a large number of nominal phrases that can cooccur with both '*ni naru*' and '*to naru*' as in (3) below:

3

(3a) isha ni/to naru ('become a doctor')

(3b) oya ni/to naru ('become a parent' (especially, referring to the birth of one's own child))

(3c) shihaisha ni/to naru ('become a ruler')

(3d) kori ni/to naru ('become ice' (referring to water becoming frozen))

(3e) arashi ni/to naru ('become a storm' (referring to the weather becoming stormy'))

there are certain types of nominal phrases which go well with '*ni naru*', but not as well with '*to naru*' as shown in (4):

(4a) kofuku/ shiawase *ni* naru ('become happy'), but ?kofuku/ ??shiawase *to* naru.

(4b) shizuka/ kirei *ni* naru ('become quiet/ pretty'), but ??shizuka/ ??kirei *to* naru.

(4c) kimochi/ ki *ni* naru ('come to feel like …'), but ?kimochi/ *ki *to* naru.

Examples such as those given in (3) and (4) above indicate that the range of nominal phrases which distributionally cooccur with '*to naru*' is considerably more restricted than in the case of '*ni naru*'.

What is the kind of contrast we have here between '*ni naru*' and '*to naru*'? (Evidently, the contrast between '*ni*' and '*to*' here is not the same as the contrast between the nominative and the instrumental case in Slavic languages (e.g. 'Katja byla pervecej/peveci (Kagan: 2020: 230) or between the predicate nominative and the preposition *zu* in German (e.g. 'Er wird Arzt.' vs. 'Er wird zum Trinker'.) Granted that both '*ni naru*' and '*to naru*' serve to encode the 'transition' type (2b) of the process of change and that thereby '*ni naru*' is the unmarked option and '*to naru*' is the marked option, what is it, then, that the speaker specifically intends to convey by choosing to say '*to naru*' rather than '*ni naru*'? To be also explained at the same time is the fact that the particle '*to*', which is commonly used to mark quoted pieces of message, has come to line itself up with the particle '*ni*', which has long since been firmly established as a case marker – a marker of goal and location in particular.

Let me start with a concrete example – a well-known proverbial saying which goes 「塵も積もれば、山となる」 ('Chiri mo tsumoreba, yama to naru'), of which a fairly close English translation will be, '(Even) dust, when accumulated (enough), will become/make a mountain'. Notice, first, the rhetorical effect generated by opting to say '*to naru*' rather than '*ni naru*'. Being a 'marked' option, '*to naru*' gives the sentence a stylistically elevated tone (reminiscent, perhaps, of ancient Chinese philosophical text or poetry), which is appropriate also to a proverb. But more importantly, notice closely how the particle '*to*' functions here. Normally, the particle '*to*' is known to serve to introduce a quoted message into the flow of speech, as when I say (or write) 'Hanako ga "Ohayo!" to itta.' (Hanako said, "Good morning!")), where the word "Ohayo!", followed by the particle '*to*' is introduced into my utterance, not as part of my own speech, but of Hanako's. (And in written language, the relevant part is further marked by quotation marks.) Thus, the use of the particle '*to*' in such cases gives an effect of alerting the hearer/reader – alerting the hearer/writer to the fact that the part of the speech which immediately precedes the particle '*to*' does not really belong to the speaker/writer but to someone else and that as such, it conveys some sort of new information to the hearer/reader. Notice that this function of the particle '*to*' as quotation marker may amply be inherited and felt even when the particle '*to*' does not openly appear to be used as quotation marker. Consider again the

particle '*to*' as used in the proverbial saying we are now discussing.   The saying concludes with a main clause which says '*yama to naru*'.   The particle '*to*' here, which follows the noun '*yama*' and precedes the verb '*naru*', may appear to function simply as a case marker and as such, may appear functionally to have nothing to do with the particle '*to*' used as quotation marker.   If, however, we choose to contrast the particle '*to*' here semantically with its unmarked counterpart '*ni*', we will immediately notice that the particle '*to*' used here is not a simple case marker at all, but is, in fact, functioning semantically very much like the particle '*to*' as quotation marker.

Let me discuss my point in more detail.   First, by opting to say '*yama to naru*' (instead of saying '*yama ni naru*'), the author of the proverb, whoever it is, means to say that the word '*yama*' , which immediately precedes the particle '*to*', is, in fact, metalinguistically distinct – in other words, the code of the language in which the word is encoded is not exactly the same as the one in which the rest of the message is encoded.   What is actually signalled by the particle '*to*' here is thus essentially the same as in those cases in which a word used by someone else is duly presented in quotation marks. As an interesting proof of this, note that it is principally possible, if so desired, to verbalize the function of the hypothetically posited quotation marks here as something like '(hito ga) … to *iu* mono' or '… to *ieru* mono'.   (Only we do not have to specify here who they are that say so.)   Thus in the case of the proverbial saying we are concerned with, '*yama to naru*' can also be verbalized as '(wareware ga) "yama" to iu mono ni naru' or in a more circumlocutory way, '(hito ni yotte) "yama" to *iwareru* mono ni naru' ('become what is called (by people) "yama"').   (Conversely, a sentence like「島村は … 相手が芸者<u>というものになった</u>今ではかえって言い出しにくかった」(川端康成『雪国』岩波文庫版, p.45）can be reverbalized as「島村は … 相手が芸者<u>となった</u>今では...」)

Recall also in this connection that quoted words are normally supposed to carry new information – new information to the hearer/reader.   This naturally has an effect of alerting the hearer/reader to what is really being meant by the quoted words.   Thus the hearer's/reader's mind is, to quote from Jakobson's well-known paper, 'Poetics and Linguistics' (1961), 'set toward the message as such', inviting the hearer/reader to start looking for any poetic device involved.   Thus in comparison with the particle '*ni*', which generally refers to a process of change in an unmarked way, the particle '*to*' appeals to the hearer/reader, challenging the hearer/reader to interpret the meaning of the nominal phrase it follows in some novel way.

This, coupled with the fact already mentioned, namely the fact that the nominal phrases followed by the particle '*to*' are generally associated with images of concrete and perceptible entities rather than images of abstract and imperceptible entities, seems to suggest that the nominal phrases followed by '*to naru*' refer, not simply to the end states of a process of change, but to some entities newly created through the process – in other words, to some entities which 'emerge' from the process.

The extended use of the particle '*to*', originally functioning as quotation marker, is not limited to those cases in which it cooccurs with the verb '*naru*'.   It can, in fact, be found quite freely in collocation with other verbs, as in the following:

> (5)雨と降る弾丸の中を駆け抜けて (ame to furu dangan no naka o kake nukete)
>   ('running through the bullets coming down like rain')

5

(6)雪と散る梅の花 (yuki to chiru ume no hana) ('plum-blossoms flying scattered like snowflakes')

(5) is a cliché of the former wartime journalism, and (6), a favourite piece of 'mitate' reminiscent of *Kokinwakashu*.　In either case, it is possible to paraphrase as「雨」/「雪」といえるほどに.

　It is very instructive, in this connection, to refer to the ways in which the uses of the quotation marks are grammatically explained.　*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English* (Appendix 7 Punctuation) offers the following account on quotation marks:

> 'to draw attention to a word that is unusual for the context, for example, … to a word that is being used for special effect, such as irony: … *Thousands were imprisoned in the name of 'national security'*.

This account applies exactly to the function of the Japanese particle '*to*' we have been discussing. Only the marking by the quotation marks is not necessarily required (which, incidentally, is also the case in English).　Thus we may now rest assured that the function of the particle '*to*' in the phrase '*to naru*' derives from and is closely related to the function of the particle '*to*' as marker of quotation in Japanese.

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